

January 2018

# A straw

Jenna Kopec  
*Nova Southeastern University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/digressions>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), and the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kopec, Jenna (2018) "A straw," *Digressions Literary Magazine*: Vol. 14 , Article 21.  
Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/digressions/vol14/iss1/21>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the CAHSS Journals at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digressions Literary Magazine by an authorized editor of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

I've never inhaled soil before, but I imagine that this is what it's like.

My lungs feel heavy and clogged and every time I breathe in it feels like something is being syphoned into them. It reminds me of a project I did in sixth grade. I took a bunch of wet sand and put it inside an orange balloon—not a normal orange but a burnt orange that was almost red. Then I put a straw on the top of the balloon and filled them both with water. I squeezed the balloon and measured the difference in water heights. I was supposed to have learned something about beaches but all I really learned was that sand is a good way to clog a straw. My lungs feel like straws filled with sand.

I know that my bed is soft because I bought memory foam but I don't feel it. I like firm things. I used to lay on the floor more but now it seems like too much work. I'm staring at the ridges of the ceiling. I wonder why they're there. What could have possibly stopped whoever built this house in the seventies from making a smooth ceiling. The ridges make the ceiling look yellow even though it's white. At least I think they do.

My phone vibrates. It's my mother. She asks if I'm still going out for coffee with Vanessa. I don't want to. I don't want to stare at the yellow-ridged ceiling anymore, either. I know I have to pick one. I know that my mother would prefer the coffee, so I tell her that I'm going. She says that I stare at the ceiling too much and that's why I can't feel the memory foam.

I breathe in a lot of wet sand. I try to prepare myself for my conversations with Vanessa this afternoon. I'll have to put on my game face. Talk about things like what I've been doing in college, relationships, friends, jobs, things like that. I can't ask her if my ceiling is really yellow or if her ceiling has ridges too. I'll have to put on my game face.

I wonder if I ask for a double shot of espresso if the coffee will have a taste. It hasn't for a while. It reminds me of oily water. I remember that I started drinking it because I liked the taste. I just can't remember what it's like. I wonder if that's like the memory foam thing but I'm afraid to ask my mother.

I'll have to put makeup on. For the game face. I'm trying to mentally psych myself for that. I don't go out without makeup because I don't look the way I'm supposed to. Yet, I haven't wanted to do the work makeup takes for months. Putting on my game face is the most exhausting part of my day. I haven't wanted to do it. I haven't wanted to do anything.

I wonder if that's the way whoever built this house felt. They didn't smooth out the ceiling because they didn't want to do the work any more. Now, it doesn't look the way it's supposed to either. The ridges make it look yellow.

I don't talk to my mother about how the ceiling is yellow and ridged when it isn't supposed to be, but she says the phase will end soon. She said that I'll like to drink coffee with Vanessa and do makeup again eventually. My phone vibrates. She asks me to pick up some milk on my way home. I promise I'll try to remember. I don't remember much these days. I can't operate my memory. I can't feel the memory foam.

I wonder if it's because of the wet sand. Originally I thought I was breathing in soil, but things grow from that. What's in the air that makes it so hard to breathe? I try to remember when the air got thick so that I can go back to the place I was when my breath was swift and sweetening. But I can't operate my memory, which makes me think the problem is in my mind. Perhaps it's eroded like the beaches and the loosened sand just needs a place to go. I think that's what I was supposed to have learned in sixth grade.

I don't have time to think about that anymore. I have to psych myself up before I go to drink oil and forget my mother's milk. I stare at the ceiling one last time. I wonder what it would take to smooth out the ridges and paint it white. I inhale a lot of sand and get up to put my game face on.